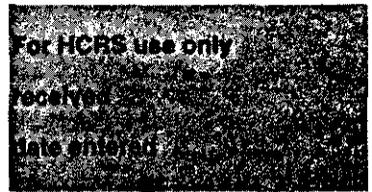


NRHP: 7-8-82  
 VLR: 10-20-81  
 187-2

**United States Department of the Interior  
 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
 Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms  
 Type all entries—complete applicable sections



**1. Name**

historic Clerk's Office, Pittsylvania County

and/or common Old Clerk's Office, Chatham (Preferred)

**2. Location**

street & number Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Chatham N/A vicinity of 5th congressional district (W. C. Daniel)

state Virginia code 51 county Pittsylvania code 143

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Town of Chatham c/o Mayor

street & number Municipal Building

city, town Chatham ~~Virginia~~ state Virginia 24531

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pittsylvania County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Chatham state Virginia

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory  
 title (2) (See Continuation Sheet #1) has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1958  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington state D. C.

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Old Clerk's Office of Pittsylvania County is located off Chatham's Main Street, behind the town offices. The one-story, gable-roof structure was built in 1812; in 1833 a two-room addition was erected. The addition has been torn down, exposing the interior partition. The building has a Flemish-bonded brick facade with four-course-American-bond brick secondary walls. The east and west elevations are distinguished by a saw-tooth brick cornice.

The entrance is found in the north half of the two-bay east elevation. It has a six-panel door framed by simple architrave trim. The bricks immediately above the door have been re-laid. A single window is found on the east and west elevations respectively; each has 9/9 hung sash with a simple architrave and square sill. The roof line is broken by a chimney on the south end. The roof is covered with wooden shingles.

As with most clerk's offices, the interior was originally treated very simply, having only plaster walls, a wooden floor, and a brick hearth. The flooring of the clerk's office has since been removed, leaving only the hearth. The county historical society, which exercises custodianship of the building, hopes to undertake a restoration which would include the reconstruction of the demolished addition and the restoration of the interior of the center section.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1812 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

An integral part of a Virginia courthouse complex, the county clerk's office represents an important facet of the Commonwealth's architectural and legal history. Clerks' offices come in a variety of styles, the respective style usually chosen to complement the main court building. The clerk's office served not only as the clerk's domain but also as the chief repository of the county's official records. The clerk was entrusted with the maintenance and care of these records, which included deeds, wills, inventories, county orders, and minutes of the county court. He had to be very trustworthy and responsible, since the ownership of property could only be legally supported by the records in his care. Built in 1812 to serve the 1783 courthouse, the Old Clerk's Office of Pittsylvania at Chatham is the oldest public building in the town. From 1813 to 1852, it served as the office of William Tunstall, Jr., and his son William H. Tunstall, who succeeded him as clerk in 1836. The simple brick structure lost its intended function in 1853 with the construction of the present courthouse, which accommodated a new clerk's office.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Pittsylvania County Court at its June term in 1812 ordered that a new clerk's office be erected at the county seat of Chatham. In 1813 the structure was completed and enclosed by a fence sixty feet square. The office first served a courthouse constructed in 1783, when the county seat was moved from Callands to a more central location at Chatham. The growth of the county by the end of the early national period required the erection of a larger courthouse in 1816. In 1833 a court order called for the enlargement of the 1812 clerk's office; the building then became "L" shaped in plan through the addition of two rooms. This later addition was torn down by a local resident who purchased the property from the county in 1853, when the present courthouse was built. The foundations of the 1833 addition remain.

The local office of county clerk was created under the Virginia Constitution of 1776. In colonial days such officials were appointed by the Secretary of the Colony from among a narrow range of candidates, nearly all of whom came from wealthy families and had served on the Secretary's own staff. During the Revolution the power of replacing the clerks as vacancies occurred devolved on the local county courts. Under the new arrangement, clerks, like judges, served on good behavior and thus enjoyed long tenure of office. Although they lacked broad legal authority, they performed an indispensable function which placed them in a position to exercise considerable political influence. Until the advent of the county boards of supervisors, the clerks were nearly the only full-time public employees in the counties. The office became elective in 1870.

In Pittsylvania County, the Tunstall family dominated the office of clerk from the late colonial period to the middle of the 19th century. William Tunstall, Sr., served for twenty-four years, from 1767 (the year in which Pittsylvania was formed from Halifax)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Johnston, Frederick . Memorials of Old Virginia Clerks. Lynchburg, Va.; J. P. Bell Co., 1888.

Pittsylvania County Order Books.

Richmond, Va. Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Archives. Pittsylvania County file 187-2, "Pittsylvania County Clerk's Office"; file 187-7, "Pittsylvania County

## 10. Geographical Data

(See Continuation Sheet # 1)

Acreeage of nominated property 1/2 acre  
Quadrangle name Chatham, Virginia

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	7	6	4	2	6	6	0	4	0	7	6	6	3	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at a point about 75'S of Route T1402 and about 150'SE of the intersection of routes T1402 and T1407; thence extending about 100'S, then about 125' W, then about 100' N, then about 125' E to point of origin.

(See Continuation Sheet # 1)

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
-------	-----	------	--------	-----	------

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
-------	-----	------	--------	-----	------

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date October 1981

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature H. Bryan Mitchell

H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director

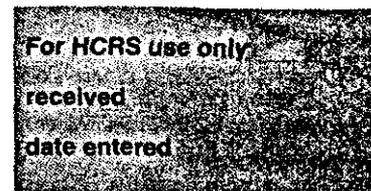
title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date

For HCRS use only I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.	date
Keeper of the National Register	date
Attest	date
Chief of Registration	date

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

CLERK'S OFFICE, PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY, MAIN STREET, CHATHAM, VA.



Continuation sheet #1

Item number 6, 8, 10, 9

Page 1

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey  
1970, 1981 State  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

8. Significance

Historical Background

to 1791. His son, William Tunstall, Jr., served for forty-five years from 1791 to 1836. His son, William H. Tunstall, served for sixteen years from 1836 to 1852. William Tunstall, Jr., for whom the 1812 office was built, also clerked for the circuit superior court of law and chancery of Pittsylvania. In his later years, most of the business of the clerk's office was performed by his son, William H. Tunstall, who was his deputy and succeeded him in the office. The 1833 addition probably was built to accommodate both clerk and deputy. In the recollections of Judge William M. Treadway, who drew a sketch of the two men at the end of the 19th century, William Tunstall, Jr., "was a model of fidelity and accuracy; and no man of his day commanded more respect and confidence in all respects. He was of medium size, with a benignant, intelligent face; unpretending in manners, always calm, and remarkable for neatness and good taste in dress. After the death of Mr. Tunstall, his son, William II, was clerk of both courts until he removed to Mississippi. No county could boast of more faithful, honorable, and capable clerks."<sup>1</sup> In recent years the building was acquired by the town of Chatham in order to assure its preservation as a landmark of the area's history. Care of the building has been entrusted to the Pittsylvania County Historical Society which hopes to undertake a restoration.

MTP/RCC/RAC

<sup>1</sup>Frederick Johnston. Memorials of Old Virginia Clerks (Lynchburg, Va.: J. P. Bell Co., 1888), pp. 309-310.

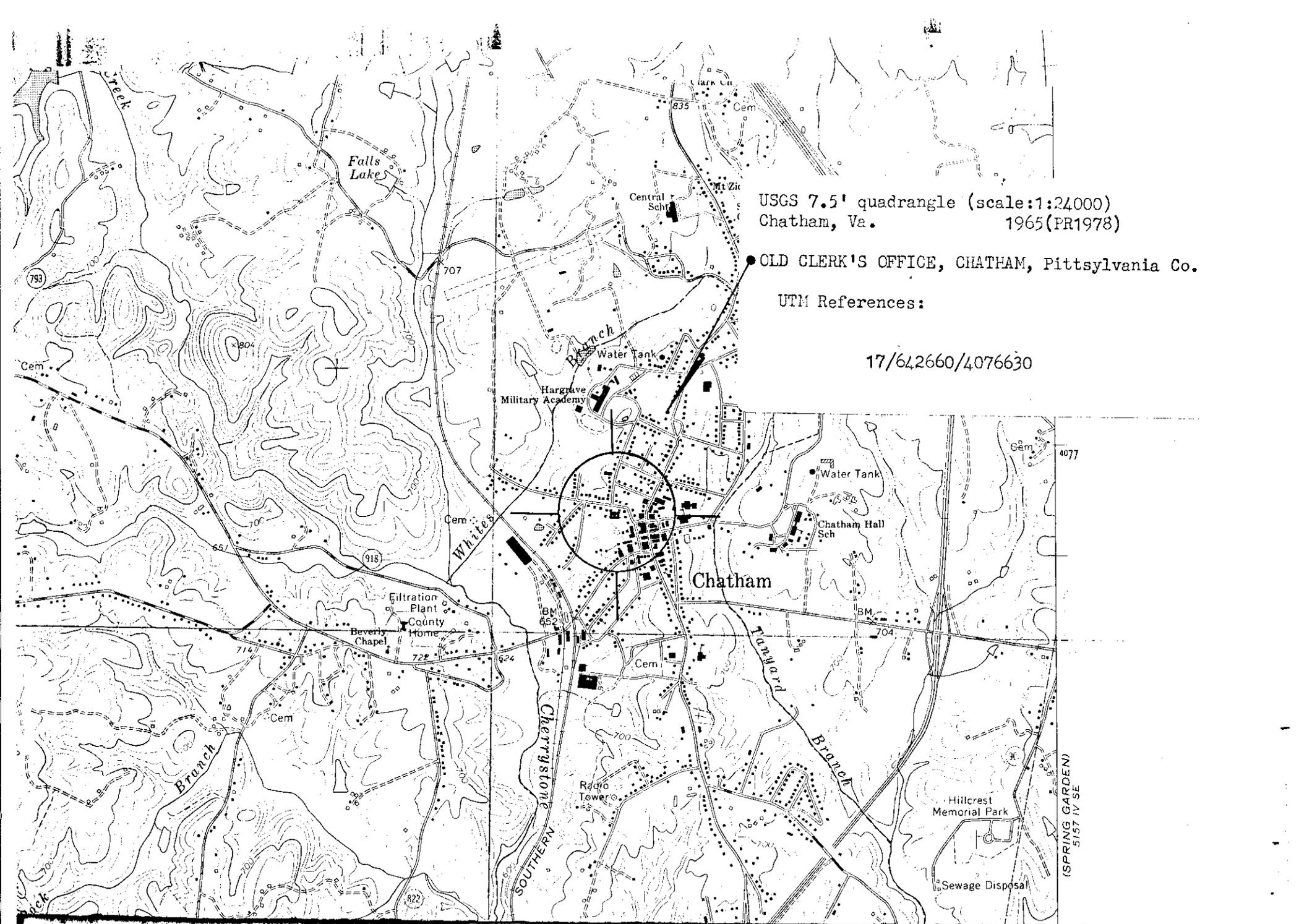
10. Geographical Data

Boundary Justification

The nominated property of  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre is drawn to include the clerk's office and the land immediately surrounding it. A reconstruction of the attached 1833 addition is scheduled to be built on its original foundations to the south of the 1812 structure. The 1833 site is included in the nominated  $\frac{1}{2}$ -acre lot.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Courthouse."



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
Chatham, Va. 1965 (PR1978)

● OLD CLERK'S OFFICE, CHATHAM, Pittsylvania Co.

UTM References:

17/642660/4076630

(SPRING GARDEN)  
5157 IV SE